

# In Brief

GFOA COLLABORATIONS | FEDERAL UPDATE



## GFOA COLLABORATIONS

### FEMA Just-in-Time Training

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A vehicle drives through streets filled with floodwater and past destroyed homes caused by Hurricane Maria in this aerial photograph taken above Barrio Obrero in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on September 25, 2017.

**T**he 2017 Atlantic hurricane season was the costliest one to date, racking up approximately \$3 billion in damages following hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, and Nate. And research has indicated that the severity and frequency of natural disasters is expected to increase in the future. Post-disaster recovery is therefore more relevant than ever, especially for local governments that face a greater risk of disaster. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Planning Capacity Building (CPCB) Team has worked in collaboration with more than 50 federal, state, local, private, and nonprofit partners, including GFOA, to develop the Just-in-Time Recovery Management Training (JIT RMT). The JIT RMT will provide local government officials with the information they need during the actual post-disaster recovery period.

#### THE NEED FOR JUST-IN-TIME TRAINING

Post-disaster recovery can be complex, particularly for communities that lack the experience to effectively manage the aftermath of a disaster. Smaller localities find themselves at a disadvantage compared to larger communities that have withstood disasters and emerged better prepared to maneuver the post-disaster phases. Natural disasters are often unexpected and intensive, requiring local governments to navigate through unfamiliar programs, obscure financing, compliance requirements, new planning considerations, and multi-agency collaborations, all in short time frames. The steep learning curve and information overload can lead to overwhelmed administrators.

Skills developed through pre-disaster trainings are useful but comparatively limited in the absence of a genuine crisis.

Widespread disaster impacts in a city, town, or county may stem from the same event, but the characteristics unique to individual communities can make developing useful pre-disaster trainings challenging, sometimes resulting in unwieldy and overly broad content. The JIT RMT provides a solution through a series of customized trainings that are conducted during the post-disaster recovery, serving as a vital resource for local governments when they need and can best use the information.

### PARTNERSHIP

GFOA's Accounting, Auditing, and Financial Reporting Committee vice-chair Diane Allison participated as a subject matter expert on behalf of GFOA in developing the training. FEMA's CPCB Team gathered feedback from more than 50 other partners through extensive interviews and requesting verbal and written input on key learning objectives and critical content for local governments.

The following partners were involved:

**Local Governments**—City of Bloomington, Illinois; City of Longmont, Colorado; Town of Lyons, Colorado; City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Monroe County, Florida; Snohomish County, Washington

**State Agencies**—State of Louisiana Office of Community Development; State of Wyoming Emergency Management Agency; State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs; State of North Dakota Department of Emergency Services

**Associations**—GFOA, Enterprise Community Partners, National Emergency Management Association, International Emergency Management Association, National Governors Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Association of Development Organizations, National Association of Counties, International City/County Management Association, National League of Cities, National Grants Management Association, Society for Human Resource Management, Louisiana Municipal Association, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

**Federal Agencies**—Department of Housing and Urban Development; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Environmental Protection Agency, Economic Recovery Support Function

**FEMA Programs**—Community Planning and Capacity Building, National Integration Center, Public Assistance, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Individual Assistance, Procurement Disaster Assistance Team, Grants, National Training and Education Division, Emergency Management Institute, Regions 6, 8, 10

### JIT RMT

The JIT RMT is a series of customized trainings provided free of charge to local governments that are recovering from the aftermath of a large disaster. To match the urgent nature of post-disaster recovery, the “just-in-time” training occurs in parallel with the post-disaster

recovery stages to avoid overwhelming local officials when faced with the unpredictable demands of the post-disaster environment. States, tribes, and territories will implement the training by determining which local communities stand to benefit most, based on their previous experiences in building the capacity of local governments for post-disaster recovery. Their open access to administrative and management funds and internal staff plays a key role in helping with a successful long-term post-disaster recovery.

The JIT RMT is targeted toward official staff within local governments and elected officials tasked with overseeing and managing disaster recovery. In addition, the training can also be useful for partners of the local government who provide IT support throughout the recovery.

### Primary audience:

Local government staff and elected officials responsible for leading disaster recovery:

- Executive staff such as the city/county manager, mayor or county executive, chief of staff, finance director, communications director, grants manager, and human resources manager
- Department heads including the public works director, planning director, housing and economic development director, health and human services manager, and building/zoning codes manager

### WHAT JIT RMT IS

- An introduction to 13 recovery management disciplines relevant to recovery.
- A gateway to additional training.
- A post-disaster, needs-based, just-in-time set of courses for those unable to get this information pre-disaster.
- Small class sizes that create a personalized experience in which participants can interact and learn from subject matter experts in the field through presentations and activities.
- Three different classes that occur 2 months after a disaster, 3 to 5 months after a disaster, and 6 months after a disaster. Each of these courses builds on information and knowledge presented in the previous phase.

### WHAT JIT RMT IS NOT

- An advanced overview of 13 recovery management disciplines relevant to recovery.
- A stand-alone course.
- A pre-disaster course that introduces what you need to know post-disaster.
- Large class sizes where information is presented in a lecture style with no interaction from participants.
- One post-disaster class.





### Secondary audience:

Partners who will be supporting the local government in its day-to-day administration and management of long-term recovery operations such as:

- Regional economic and planning organizations
- Councils of government
- County governments (if the primary audience is city or town staff)
- Neighboring towns with mutual aid agreements

The training includes three post-disaster recovery stages: short-term (two months post-disaster), intermediate (three to five months post-disaster) and long-term (six or more months post-disaster).

Each unit is less than an hour. Complex information is condensed into bite sizes to prevent overloading local officials with excessive content. The training also provides flexible mechanisms for learning, such as activities, interactive lectures, peer examples, webinars, and checklists.

Instructors are subject matter experts with backgrounds in federal recovery processes, grants, state and federal procurement, local disaster recovery

experience, and overall benefits and timeline of a recovery planning process. Some of these instructors have worked with local government and have experienced disasters in their own communities, allowing them to provide informative guidance in assisting other local communities impacted by similar disasters.

The training incorporates the following recovery management disciplines, which will be tailored to suit the recovery of the local government:

- Management/leadership
- Financial management
- Grants management
- Procurement
- Recovery staffing
- Public assistance
- Individual assistance
- Mitigation
- Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery
- Outcome-driven recovery planning
- Assessment/data management
- Communications
- Partnerships

An aerial view of flood waters from Hurricane Delta surround structures destroyed by Hurricane Laura on October 10, 2020 in Creole, Louisiana.

### PILOT TRAININGS

Originally set to take place in person, the first pilot trainings for JIT RMT were conducted online because of the COVID-19 pandemic. To adapt to the online environment, FEMA used polls, breakout rooms, and chat questions to help keep participants engaged. Louisiana was chosen as the first state to test the pilot because of its heavy engagement in creating the course and the state's high frequency of hurricanes. Although originally scheduled for August, with the arrival of Hurricane Laura, FEMA CPCB and the State of Louisiana decided to use the storm to pilot the proposed structure of JIT RMT, which is meant to occur in three stages (two months, three to five months, and six months after an event). FEMA and the state set a schedule to conduct the two-month iteration of the course in October and November 2020, the three- to five-month course in January 2021, and the six-month iteration of the course in March 2021.